



# THE DEVIL WEARS HEMP

EVERY WOMAN'S GUIDE TO RECYCLING  
THEIR MOTHER-IN-LAW

BY ANN KAPLAN

They come in all shapes and sizes. Large, small compact and accessorized, but the one that takes the cake is packaged in an irritating layer of grey, stands under five feet and marches to her own loafer-clad beat with a blue box in tow. Yes, it is sad to say but the saying is true: "When God Giveth, he Taketh Away", and this time he took the cake. I am now blessed with Norma Rae for a Mother-In-Law – having tolerated many verbal onslaughts of my foibles, finding myself resorting to name calling in the shower (short shower – must conserve water).

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I never realized how unworthy and unaccomplished I was until I stood towering under the verbal onslaught of this pint sized dictator...Admonishing me for working too hard, augmenting too much and wielding the pen for less worthy causes than saving the planet. I have tolerated years of abuse under her tongue only surviving by visualizing pounding her into a hole like the rubber mallets used at the amusement parks, foot resting in victory on her grey roots with only beady little eyes protruding from the dirt.

I am a victim. I endure “the mole” digging through my garbage, searching for that one paper clip I could have recycled, scolding me for not using cloth diapers (wait ‘til she reaches incontinence) and reprimanding me for wasting valuable surgeons times in the pursuit of eternal youth. No, the devil does not wear Prada, she wears hemp and is situated 2759.37 miles away amongst the tree huggers on the west coast of B.C..

## TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

But no, no and no, I do not have distance as an advantage. With the onslaught of new technology this tech savvy grandma has

managed to master the internet, googling, downloading and printing anything related to the pursuit of nonsense I am supposedly on. Little age-spotted hands cutting pasting and highlighting, actually taking valuable time to fold, stuff and stamp then send these reminders to me with a triumphant “Told You So” written with some henna compound on the recyclable envelope. I look back to how I allowed myself to land in this hideous situation and realize it was a plot. My most recent husband kept her from me, only introducing ‘it’ once we were banded together under the church and our first born was about to arrive. Just as one remembers their child’s first words, embedded in my mind was the congratulatory order by my daughters paternal grandparent “I hope you’re going to teach that baby to recycle!” followed by her first step, unfortunately in our direction to visit the little thing.

Yes, once she got her Birkenstocks through the door, my husband exited temporarily for the corporate hills thanking me for taking care of family duties. The self-proclaimed family matriarch then found purpose in controlling through threats (“Well perhaps I should visit”) and forcing us to open her letters by sending cheques in every fifth envelope.



## YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM, JOIN 'EM

But then, as good things can come in small packages, I have found a saint in the making. Almost like opening the curtain and finding OZ, this woman is more than an advocate for the

environment. Once I placed my shield on the ground and lowered my weapons I found I had joined the other side, I found I was subconsciously practicing what she preached.

It gets worse. My eyes are now on the children, checking their recycling bins and nagging them to conserve energy. I have morphed into an even more irritating version of my nemesis with so many more victims to nag. I see that she stands for what is good and what she believes in – reminding us that every little bit counts. I see that what she does is good. She recycles, she turns off lights, she takes public transit (she irritates) and she speaks her mind.

I can now say that I am better for knowing her. That pint sized powerhouse still visits us on holidays, sharing in the festivities (who ever heard of “Free Range Ham”?) and making sure we are aware of the contributions we can make to the betterment of our society. I have stopped envisioning stuffing her in a blue box and now look forward to her visits, armed with thick skin, finding only amusement in her pursuits. (I even hand her a paper bag and gloves when she walks in the door and direct her to each point of disposal). And in all of this I have found the ultimate pay-back. The pay-back for plotting and scheming me into the pursuit of garbage sorting, I have found the one revenge feared by the lesser half of a marriage – I have become what every man fears, I have become my mother-in-law. And I will conquer!